

Appl. No. : 10/803,272
Filed : March 18, 2004

REMARKS

The foregoing amendments and the following remarks are responsive to the April 10, 2006 Office Action. Claims 1-23 are pending in the present application, Claims 15 and 16 having been amended and Claims 21-23 having been added as new. Applicants submit that new Claims 21-23 do not add new matter to the application.

Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to reconsider the above-captioned application in view of the following remarks.

Claims 1-20 Are Not Obvious In View Of The Combination of Uraki and Otsubo

Claims 1-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over Uraki *et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 5,977,515) ("Uraki") in view of Otsubo *et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 6,507,000) ("Otsubo"). Applicants respectfully traverse the present rejections.

Claim 1

Claim 1 recites (emphasis added):

1. An apparatus for processing a surface of an inhabitable structure, the apparatus comprising:

a laser base unit adapted to provide laser light to an interaction region, the laser light removing material from the structure, the laser base unit comprising a laser generator and a laser head coupled to the laser generator, the laser head adapted to remove the material from the interaction region, thereby providing reduced disruption to activities within the structure;

an anchoring mechanism adapted to be releasably coupled to the structure and releasably coupled to the laser head; and

a controller electrically coupled to the laser base unit, the controller adapted to transmit control signals to the laser base unit in response to user input.

Applicants submit that the combination of Uraki in view of Otsubo does not disclose or suggest all the limitations of Claim 1. For example, the combination of Uraki and Otsubo does not disclose or suggest "an anchoring mechanism adapted to be releasably coupled to the structure and releasably coupled to the laser head." The Examiner states that component 11 of Uraki is "an anchoring mechanism adapted to be releasably coupled to the structure and releasably coupled to the laser head." Component 11, however, is a laser torch driving mechanism that moves the laser torch 6 (e.g., at specific pitches for partially overlapping target portions 28). Uraki, col. 13, ls. 48-56. Uraki does not disclose or suggest that the driving

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mechanism is releasably coupled to either the laser head or the structure. Therefore, Uraki does not disclose or suggest all the limitations of Claim 1. Furthermore, Applicants submit that Otsubo does not disclose or suggest those limitations of Claim 1 which are not found in Uraki.

For at least this reason, Claim 1 is patentably distinguished over the combination of Uraki and Otsubo. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner withdraw the rejection of Claim 1 and pass this claim to allowance.

Claims 2-14

Claims 2-6 and 11-13 depend from Claim 1. Claims 7-9 depend from Claim 6. Claim 10 depends from Claim 9. Claim 14 depends from Claim 13. Applicants submit that Claims 2-14 define over the cited references, alone or in combination, not only because they depend from Claim 1, but also on their own merit. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner withdraw the rejection of Claims 2-14 and pass these claims to allowance.

Claim 15 and new Claim 21

Applicants have amended Claim 15 to recite (emphasis added):

15. An apparatus for processing a surface of an inhabitable structure with reduced disruption to activities within the structure, the apparatus comprising:
means for generating laser light;
means for providing the laser light to an interaction region of the structure to remove material from the structure;
means for confining the material and removing the material from the interaction region;
means for releasably anchoring the providing means to the structure;
and
means for releasably coupling the providing means to the anchoring means.

Applicants submit that the combination of Uraki and Otsubo does not disclose or suggest all the limitations of amended Claim 15. For example, the combination of cited references does not disclose or suggest a “means for releasably anchoring the providing means to the structure” or a “means for releasably coupling the providing means to the anchoring means.” For at least this reason, amended Claim 15 is patentably distinguished over the combination of Uraki and Otsubo. Thus, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner withdraw the rejection to Claim 15 and pass this claim to allowance.

New Claim 21 depends from amended Claim 15, so Claim 21 defines over the cited references, alone or in combination, not only because it depends from amended Claim 15, but

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also on its own merit. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to pass Claim 21 to allowance.

Claim 16 and new Claims 22 and 23

Applicants have amended Claim 16 to recite (emphasis added):

16. A method of processing a surface of an inhabitable structure with reduced disruption to activities within the structure, the method comprising:
providing an apparatus comprising:
a laser generator;
a laser head coupled to the laser generator, the laser head adapted to remove material from an interaction region, thereby providing reduced disruption to activities within the structure, wherein the laser generator is positioned remotely from the interaction region; and
an anchoring mechanism adapted to be releasably coupled to the structure and releasably coupled to the laser head;
releasably coupling the anchoring mechanism to the structure and to the laser head;
remotely generating laser light using the laser generator;
providing the laser light to the surface using the laser head, causing the laser light to interact with the structure in the interaction region to remove material from the structure; and
confining the material and removing the material from the interaction region.

Applicants submit that the combination of Uraki and Otsubo does not disclose or suggest all the limitations of amended Claim 16. For example, the combination of cited references does not disclose or suggest providing an apparatus comprising “an anchoring mechanism adapted to be releasably coupled to the structure and releasably coupled to the laser head” or “releasably coupling the anchoring mechanism to the structure and to the laser head.” For at least this reason, amended Claim 16 is patentably distinguished over the combination of Uraki and Otsubo. Thus, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner withdraw the rejection to Claim 16 and pass this claim to allowance.

Each of new Claims 22 and 23 depends from amended Claim 16, so each of Claims 22 and 23 defines over the cited references, alone or in combination, not only because it depends from amended Claim 16, but also on its own merit. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to pass Claims 22 and 23 to allowance.

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Claim 17

Claim 17 recites (emphasis added):

17. An apparatus for processing a surface of an inhabitable structure, the apparatus comprising:

a base unit adapted to provide energy waves to an interaction region, the energy waves removing material from the structure, the base unit comprising a generator and a head coupled to the generator, the head adapted to remove the material from the interaction region, thereby providing reduced disruption to activities within the structure;

an anchoring mechanism adapted to be releasably coupled to the structure and releasably coupled to the head; and

a controller electrically coupled to the base unit, the controller adapted to transmit control signals to the base unit in response to user input.

Applicants submit that the combination of Uraki and Otsubo does not disclose or suggest all the limitations of Claim 17. For example, the combination of cited references does not disclose or suggest “an anchoring mechanism adapted to be releasably coupled to the structure and releasably coupled to the head.” For at least this reason, Claim 17 is patentably distinguished over the combination of Uraki and Otsubo. Thus, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner withdraw the rejection to Claim 17 and pass this claim to allowance.

Claims 18-20

Claims 18-20 depend from Claim 17. Applicants submit that Claims 18-20 define over the cited references, either alone or in combination, not only because they depend from Claim 17, but also on their own merit. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner withdraw the rejection of Claims 18-20 and pass these claims to allowance.

SUMMARY

For the reasons described above, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner withdraw the rejection of the claims and pass Claims 1-23 to allowance.

The undersigned has made a good faith effort to respond to all of the rejections and objections in the case and to place the claims in condition for immediate allowance. Nevertheless, if any undeveloped issues remain or if any issues require clarification, the Examiner is respectfully requested to call Applicants’ attorney in order to resolve such issue promptly.

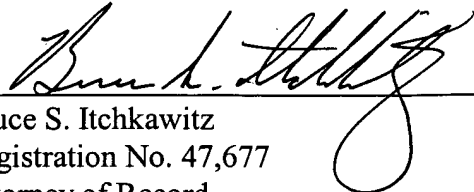
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Please charge any additional fees, including any fees for additional extension of time, or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 11-1410.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: 7/6/06

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